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ABSTRACT

The first working paper for UNESCO's Interdisciplinary Symposium on Life-long Education summarizes for participants some of the problems arising from the evolution of educational systems in the direction of lifelong education, some of the basic issues involved, and some of the requirements it meets and the consequences it may have. The areas covered are: (1) purpose of the sumposium--to answer the questions "what can be done to transform existing education systems so that the kind of education they provide is in keeping with the aims and requirements of lifelong education?"; (2) some points for consideration by participants--experience with matters related to lifelong education, the nature of the educational process as related to lifelong education, analysis of structure whose main function in education is not pedagogical, analysis of other factors making for change in educational structures, and others; (3) some issues in lifelong education--the educational dimension of personal experience and the possibility of individual self-fulfillment, the relationship between education and the overall needs of the local, national and international community, the connection between work and education, and others; (4) the starting point--discussion of determining factors in the development of a society's education structures and needs; and (5) modes of action--analysis of existing educational structures and processes. (For related document, see AC 014 275.) (KM)

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON LIFE-LONG EDUCATION

(Paris, 25 September - 2 October 1972)

This is the first working paper prepared for participants in the international symposium on life-long education. Although the meeting is to be essentially an opportunity to discuss some specific and significant experiences from which lessons may be drawn, it has been thought desirable that the discussions should take place in the light of a conception of life-long education on which broad agreement has already been reached.

The purpose of the following observations is consequently to remind participants of some of the problems arising from the evolution of educational systems in the direction of life-long education, some of the basic issues involved and some of the requirements it meets and the consequences it may have. These observations lie outside the actual field of discussion, but they may be of some use for participants in so far as they bear them in mind when comparing experiences with one another. A second document. A second document, containing a brief account of the lessons to be learnt from their experiences, will aserve as a starting point for the discussions. It will be based on the statements drafted by the participants.

I - PURPOSE OF THE SYMPOSIUM

1. The work plan for life-long education in the Approved Programme and Budget for 1971-1972 (document 16 C/5 Approved, para. 1084), specifies that :

> "an interdisciplinary symposium ... will be organized in 1971 to assess the progress made in 1970 ... towards a clearer understanding of life-long education and the application of consequent reforms."

2. The Secretariat thought it desirable to formulate the objective thus defined in the light of the discussion of life-long education by the General Conference at its sixteenth session. For the many individual contributions to the discussion in both the Programme Commission and plenary sessions yielded clear and valuable information on the matter, and showed that the idea of life-long education was nowadays much better understood and had the support of many people in a very large number of Member States. It therefore seemed permissible to acknowledge that the first phase of Unesco's work in regard to life-long education - that of formulating concepts and defining theories - was drawing to a close. What mattered now was to prepare for the second stage, which would be essentially one of action; and while it was desirable to clarify the concept still further, this was to be done not by theory, but on the basis of experience to date and with a view to taking further action. In this way Unesco could, within the limits of its resources, help to find an answer to the question asked by a large number of delegations at the General Conference : what can be done to transform existing education systems so that the kind of education they provide is in keeping with the aims and requirements of life-long education?

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3. The idea of the present meeting springs from a desire to find an answer to this eminently topical question. The Symposium brings together experts from countries in the various geographic and cultural regions who have had a wide variety of experience in regard to training, specialization, and the nature of their professional duties. What they have in common is that they have initiated or carried out activities the object of which is to promote the evolution of the theory - and, still more, the practice - of education in the direction of life-long education, or which have in fact done so. It is hoped that the statements made by the various experts on the work for which they are responsible (administration of an educational centre or institution, teaching, administrative duties, organization, etc.) will not only lead to a profitable exchange of views, but will enable us to understand how the transformation of an educational system works, how and at what points action is taken, what resources and aid are involved, what obstacles are met with and how they can be overcome. The Symposium, therefore, is essentially a meeting of people actually engaged in educational work, who will pool their ideas in an attempt to see what can be learnt from the first experiences and to determine the conceptual bases for future action.

II - SOME POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

Without prejudging the exact nature of the problems which participants will have occasion to examine in the course of the Symposium - situations and problems they all face in their different circumstances - it may be accepted that the discussions could cover a number of topics, such as the following:

(a) The participants' direct and observed experience of matters related to life-long education. Difficulties, obstacles, favourable factors, the forms taken by individual participation (children, young people, adults) and by collective participation (associations, groups, etc.).

(b) The nature of the educational process as related to life-long education. Teacher/pupil relationship; relations between individual educators and between educators and educational institutions, social life, community life and production.

(c) Analysis of structures whose main function and rôle in education is not pedagogical : the mass communication media, industry, trade unions, cultural institutions, etc.

(d) Analysis of the qualitative and quantitative demand for education made by social forces which may be a factor in social, economic and educational change (workers, young people, underprivileged groups).

(e) Analysis of other factors making for change in educational structures : scientific, industrial and technological progress, mass communication media, etc.

(f) Analysis of legislation and the planning process at all levels (governments, ministries of education, the private sector, schools and universities).

(g) Proposed research and experiment to be carried out at the level of educational structures and Member States and by international co-operation.

The opportunity offered by the Symposium to undertake an individual, practical and institutional analysis of educational experiences will enable participants to put aside theorizing about education and obtain first-hand knowledge of the changing situations which reflect their day-to-day experience.

III - SOME ISSUES IN LIFE-LONG EDUCATION

There are certain basic issues inherent in the idea of life-long education, and if we examine them we shall be able to eliminate or avoid ambiguity. The object of such an examination is to prompt participants to analyse experiences and to provide a framework for their analysis, rather than to formulate a theory of life-long education.

Individual and group adaptability to change, the educational dimension of personal experience and the possibility of individual self-fulfilment; independence, self-education and the active participation of all in their own education; the relationship between education and the overall needs of the local, national and international community; the connexion between work and education; the de-institutionalization of education in juxtaposition with the ever-increasing institutionalization of cultural experiences - these are but a few of the issues on which agreement exists among those concerned with the concept of life-long education.

It is for the participants to examine these issues with regard to the possibility of practical action and identify the obstacles to such action.

In all these issues there is evidence of a realization that education should be all-embracing, that we learn from the sum of all our experience, and that we must not accord greater importance to one period of life - youth or manhood - than to another in providing opportunities for learning and the various institutions required.

Life-long education implies a circular relationship between the various educational experiences; no special importance should be given to any particular structures (university, school, place of work, mass communication media, communities, etc.) or functions (research, cultural studies, vocational training, cultural creativity and production, popularization). Education relates to individual people engaged in social, cultural, economic and scientific activities. The main object is not to improve existing institutions with a view to life-long education. We shall not get very far by adding life-long education to primary, secondary and university education, literacy teaching, vocational training in school or on the job, leisure, education in the home or the activities of associations.

The development of the personality - intellectual, affective, aesthetic, physical and social - is the result of day-to-day experience, and its starting point is the life of each individual, so that people are educated not only through educational experiences in the strict meaning of the term; the community, the place of work, family life and the company of friends and societal life in the broadest sense of the term are also important as educational structures.

Our object, therefore, is not to suggest a system for life-long education, but to give more scope to day-to-day educational experiences and see that they are supported by educational structures instead of being hindered by them.

The refreshing quality of spontaneous educational experiments undertaken in order to cope with situations that make for change (for example, the creativeness of emigrants, the cultural resistance of colonized peoples, etc.) - experiments which are the fruit of collective as well as individual effort - tends to vanish when they are taken over by educational structures. Is that a necessary consequence of institutionalization? And why is it right to ask research workers and educational theorists to reflect upon educational innovation, while at the same time educators in the same society are penalized for acting similarly in practice?

These questions concern us directly, if the purpose of our investigations is not merely to add another educational project to all those which lie waiting in research centres and ministries, and perhaps in the international organizations as well.

If life-long education really means that everybody may be both teacher and pupil, educational research and innovation cannot be exclusively a matter for specialists. Experiments are constantly being made, and university laboratories and schools are by no means the only places in which such matters are being thought out.

Take, for instance, the relationship between work and training. There is little to be gained by insisting on better teaching techniques in vocational training or by introducing new vocational subjects into the first part of the secondary course. Curriculum revision is essential, but again it can only be a consequence and not a starting point. Any partial solution for these problems involves challenging the entire education system in which educational experiences and working experiences, workers and teachers, intellectual work and manual work are to be found side by side.

If we observe people who learn their job as they work, we see that most of our educators are not professional teachers, that our reasons for learning in everyday life differ profoundly from our reasons for learning at school, and that learning is always a group experience. Can these problems be solved by introducing a new school subject, by using a new technique or a teaching machine, by arranging for teachers to spend some time in factories? Perhaps there is no ready-made solution, but it is not an easy subject to investigate. Economic development, unemployment, employers, unions, new technological methods and social and economic changes in the labour market are only some of the factors involved in our consideration of vocational training, and educational theorists find themselves in difficulties as they face these problems - and often alone.

Non-institutional education throughout life is to a certain extent a long-standing tradition in the working classes; but what are they to understand by "life-long education" when they are offered it? An extension of school, to which they are still unaccustomed? The offer of a substitute for a higher out-of-school or extra-university education, to which workers have no access (although the schools and universities are beginning to open their doors more widely to them)? Or the chance of educational experiences which are related to their need for individual and collective development?

Recent sociological research, which has revealed the determination of the middle classes to take advantage of the opportunities offered by continuous training and, by contrast, the scepticism of the workers, calls for some consideration of the ambiguous nature of the concept of life-long education and of its first achievements, both in school and out of school.

Preparing for the new social and cultural rôles of a society in transition is a matter that interests the workers, both for themselves and for their children, but they wish to participate either in affirming their rôle or in defining the criteria applicable to their education. For example, they are by no means unaware of the importance of vocational training, but they question the validity of initial or continuous vocational training which is based on the maintenance of the education system as it is today and which is an integral part of it.

Life-long education, based on the notion of the individual's and the group's adaptability to change, is in the process of freeing itself from institutional constraint and resistance, which are particularly hostile to change in education. Its liberation presupposes active participation in social development and a growing awareness on the part of the forces involved in that change.

These forces and these factors of change are often overlooked in considering educational renewal, for educational institutions and theorists regard themselves as being mainly responsible for such renewal.

But the major transformations of society are taking place outside the schools and universities, and educators should take an active part in them. Scientific and technological development, the production demands of the key industries, the speed of communications and above all the social forces which play their part in social, economic and educational change (workers, the young, the categories which are underprivileged because of their ethnic grouping, sex, geographic origin, etc.) - these must be the starting points for thinking about education, and not the aim to which education is directed.

These forces and factors are not all of the same dimension. The logic of economic development is often opposed to that of social development. Their mutual influence can only be dialectical, but the level and nature of the dialectic may vary from one country to another and from one situation to another.

Scientific, technological and economic development (at one and the same time independent and interdependent) is of great moment to education, but frequently the only response of educators is passive acceptance of science, technology and production or avoidance of the whole issue.

It is important to view scientific and technological development from a historical and social angle and regard it as the result of collective activity; to see industrial development in its entirety, discover new criteria of efficiency and assign to such development broader aims not exclusively concerned with the growth of GNP; to see in the communications explosion an increased need to question the need for the geographic, social and cultural barriers which prevent individuals, social groups and countries from living together and sharing their experience.

Workers who want an integrated general and vocational training, young people who find or create educational experiences both inside and outside the system, the peoples of the Third World who are beginning to refuse the kind of education that is imposed on them from without, women who demand a new status and new opportunities for all-round education, the underprivileged categories (emigrants, minority groups, etc.) who are not content with special teaching, but want continuous education from the beginning, so that they can become an integral part of society - all these may prove factors leading to the renewal of education.

These are the factors that make it possible to challenge the present compartmentalization of educational structures and their hierarchy, to transform initial and continuous training into life-long individual and collective learning.

But the analysis cannot be complete unless we allow for the factors which have a negative effect on education. An analysis of the cultural, structural, psychological and political obstacles to change is an essential part of the work and of educational research, for the socio-analysis of institutions is also an aspect of self-education.

IV - THE STARTING POINT

The political, demographic, economic, geographic, historical and cultural variables in the existing international situation and the way in which they are interpreted by the peoples concerned are determining factors in the qualitative and quantitative development of a society's education structures. No other starting point is possible.

But we must make an effort if we are to discover the real needs of the individual and see them as part of a changing world, bearing in mind that the education variable may play an outstanding rôle in such change. Compulsory schooling, the generalization of adult education and the use of the mass communication media for educational purposes may develop new needs which the existing structures are not ready to meet.

The transition from traditional education to new structures for life-long education is brought about by decisions and action at various levels in a society, and it is impossible to formulate the theory behind such a transformation. But an analysis of what has been done in various countries may enable us to understand the process by which education is becoming, both spatially and temporally, an unending process. The demand for education, qualitative changes, educational trends and the distribution of the resources assigned to education are of most interest to us.

In the countries of the Third World, independent experiments are needed in order to meet the educational, individual and collective needs of nations which have recently acceded to independence and are anxious to consolidate it. The crisis of the élitist education systems and the questioning of the effectiveness of the education systems in these countries are the results of such efforts.

The indigenous culture, which was often crushed by colonization, is a key to interpretation and analysis and, at the same time, the prerequisite for developing independent experiments, but it is not to be confused with its purely traditional manifestations. The new situations associated with the drift to the towns, urbanization, proletarianization, urban unemployment and the new farming methods are starting points for experiments in education by which it is hoped to solve contemporary problems. These, and the new forms of popular culture, are the points from which a start must be made if we are to evolve a form of education which is not only a preparation for change, but change itself.

Life-long education can only develop provided it is not confined to ad hoc institutions and is not restricted to certain sectors (vocational training, adult education). It is not only the answer to immediate needs, those related

to certain restricted functions. At the same time, it must not be a monolithic, rigid system because the way in which an educational system of this kind will develop cannot be planned ahead, though it must be studied.

The organization of educational structures must be seen to from day to day rather than laid down beforehand. The degree of independence and autonomy acquired through education is an indication of how well the structure and the process of education are organized in relation to the issues of life-long education. Only through such autonomy and independence can life-long education be developed in time and space.

The aim of the educational experiences that we freely choose is the conquest of our cultural, intellectual and affective autonomy (which conditions that of the community as a whole,and vice-versa). Education which teaches us, individually and collectively, to be less dependent on institutions and structures gives rise to new learning requirements which are linked to the new rôle which we shall be able to play in each domain.

The ability of the educational structures to meet the need for individual autonomy and community development is also related to their flexibility, and that flexibility is in fact an indication of their capacity for life-long education. But is it possible to speak of new trends and structures for life-long education?

V - MODES OF ACTION

Some of the structures for life-long education already exist, but to a large extent they have still to be invented. Schools, or an end to schools? The problem is a false one if the school, university and out-of-school structures and education in general can be challenged, not only by new teaching methods, but by the users, who from now on will not be exclusively schoolchildren and students.

The de-institutionalization of education affects school and out-of-school education, the family and societal life, the place of work and leisure. Such de-institutionalization presupposes the participation of all (children, young people and adults) in the task of creating conditions in which education in all its richness can be experienced and made available to others. De-institutionalization calls for the constant analysis of education and sometimes a dialectical juxtaposition to it, the introduction of new structures, individual and collective creativity and a rich societal life (but one in which individuals are not associated in order to select them and place them at different levels).

Schools, universities and adult education and vocational training institutions must be subjected to examination because of the widening gap between the community's need for training and the capacity of these institutions to meet it. Our starting point must be the community's need, and not only an internal improvement of these institutions or a purely quantitative increase in staff.

These needs must be constantly analysed by the various bodies in conjunction - in many cases, with bodies outside the schools and the world of formal education.

Trends and structures at various levels may be analysed from the angle of life-long education : legislation, educational institutions, movements and associations, the day-to-day experience of people in their work, leisure, family life, etc. It must not be forgotten that such analysis is often arbitrary, for we lack criteria and means of comparison.

As we make this analysis, it becomes increasingly clear that institutions, particularly those in the out-of-school sector, are attempting to meet the community's desire for life-long education in time and space. The following are some examples : the transformation of welfare centres and activities into educational centres and activities; the transformation of libraries from centres for the conservation of books into centres for the promotion of cultural activities; the transformation of escapist leisure pursuits into educational leisure (travel for the young, film clubs, theatres), etc. But the education offered by these institutions does not always make for autonomy. Quantity becomes more important than quality, and "life-long education" becomes a service that is offered rather than the aim of educational activity. Nevertheless, some resistance to this can be seen among adults and young people who make use of the service.

At pre-primary level, teachers, parents and the community want to obtain for their children - and themselves - a new educational experience, and not only to take advantage of a service. The crisis of family and school education is being lived out in these new establishments where the teaching tradition is fortunately not so rigid as elsewhere; and perhaps, paradoxically, because children resist manipulation more forcibly than adults do.

But in school and university institutions, too, there is very strong pressure from users to carry out experiments in life-long education. The education of the masses calls in question the status, prestige and future professional rôle of students and educators. The trend is towards regarding education as immediate experience rather than as a preparation for the future. On the other hand, mass education introduces all the contradictions of society into educational institutions, and in this way education itself becomes a form of change.

The discrepancy between school or university diplomas and career prospects is making students think of training at a later stage than the initial phase of education. Recurrent education may be the beginning of a solution to this problem, and it will be interesting to examine the first results critically in relation to life-long education. Certain innovations in secondary and high education (units of value which are transferable and can be turned to account, certificates covering the school record insread of diplomas, more diversification and easier communication between the various establishments) also make for a new attitude on the part of students.

But the deepest and most salutary crisis is perhaps to be found in initial and continuous vocational training,whether in school or on the job. If vocational training is merely a matter of handing on knowledge of the "arts and crafts", it is doomed to be rapidly superseded as science and technology develop. But the contradictions are particularly marked in vocational training because in many cases the needs of industry, modern farming and the tertiary sector are not necessarily in harmony with the logic of scientific development, and because the workers' demand for general training is not the same as the employers' (culture versus ability; specialization versus training in a variety of skills, etc.).

The demand for life-long education is also addressed to institutions whose function is not primarily educational. Youth movements, political parties, trade unions and professional and leisure associations are asked by their members to provide training, and not only pre-service and in-service training for skilled workers. Political, trade union and professional experience is interpreted as education, and the desired renewal of education frequently involves questioning the validity of institutions. The failures and successes of participation and self-management are only one aspect of the results of such renewal.

The mass communication media as institutions are similarly challenged and appealed to by users. It is not enough to regard them as a means of democratizing education (see the plans for education by radio at primary, secondary, university and vocational training levels). Their overall activity has an educational impact, and the users are anxious not only to make use of them, but to take part in running them. Given their extraordinary technological development, the educational experiences that this may lead to are difficult to forecast.

Educational experiences have increasingly numerous frames of reference; school and out-of-school institutions are only some of them. The contradiction between an increased demand for a public education service and that for independent educational experiences is but an apparent contradiction; the nature of the public education services does not prevent users from wanting to participate actively and freely in their own education.

It may be expected that, at the institutional level, State establishments, users' associations, mass movements, action taken by the infrastructure and individuals will all play an active part in the development of educational experiences. The rôle of the national and international community and their institutions is to make education increasingly public, democratic, free and decentralized.

Educational planning within the process of life-long education is also open to reproach if it fails to understand the changes taking place and what the future will be like. It is no longer enough to allocate a certain sum, and a forecast of the demand for labour (an increasingly uncertain matter) can no longer be the only criterion for such planning. The regular investigation of the needs of users (whether individuals or groups), evaluation of the educational creativeness of individuals and groups, and the active participation of the community are only some of the new aspects of such planning.

The need to reform teaching methods and retrain teachers has been frequently stressed. The new educational experiences call for new criteria for the planning, administration and creation of educational structures, and the policy for recruiting and training educators is the outcome of this new approach. Professionals and organizers will learn much from the new educational experiences, and not only from teacher training colleges and universities; these can give no more than an initial basic training, which only certain educators will receive.

The need to restore imagination in the matter of teaching to every individual - instead of its being wrongfully made the monopoly of the educational theorists - means that the Symposium will not formulate a theory to be compulsorily accepted; experiences must be the source of imagination. What are the obstacles to self-education, change and the de-institutionalization of training in the universities, ministries, schools, adult centres, trade unions and international organizations in which we work, and in "symposia"? What we can discuss is our experience of such matters and ways of dealing with them. It is the function of libraries to provide us with information concerning the philosophy, methodology and technology of education.

How do we react when our views about education are distorted in daily practice? What implicit and explicit criticism is made which gradually reduces the value of educational innovations that are put into practice? How does it come about that the products of imagination in regard to education change when they are incorporated in institutions (participation, democracy, etc.)?

Adaptability to change is becoming an essential quality in professional teachers and in political and administrative authorities. Leaving others to be the agents of change is equivalent to a refusal to take part in educational renewal.

Those who are interested in educational renewal cannot avoid thinking about past experience, and in doing so they are bound to see the gap between proclaimed educational principles and the actual performance of adults and educational theorists. Educational renewal calls for a genuine analysis of experience, which leads to a sharing of success and failure. It is in this way that projects can be implemented and research can become creative. Education, which is never a solitary venture, obtains its collective dimension as a result of such analysis.

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